

## FEMINISM IN *GOD IS A WOMAN* MV: A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** Music as one of the largest media is used to influence audiences, which in this case is woman portrayal or feminism. Ariana Grande released a woman empowerment song and its music video entitled that portrays feminism. The goal of this study is to examine the portrayal of feminism in Ariana Grande's *God Is a Woman* MV. The data in this qualitative research is analyzed using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). The findings revealed that the *God is a Woman* MV symbolizes post-modern feminism ideology, as shown by Ariana as the primary character who has the freedom to express herself, full authority over her body, and the power or strength to confront patriarchy. Furthermore, the music video depicts radical feminism ideology by depicting woman superiority over man. Ariana impact audiences by messages given, which are a post-modern feminist concept and radical feminism ideology, through using music videos as a platform to influence audiences.

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Post-modern, Radical, Multimodal, Critical Discourse Analysis*

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## INTRODUCTION

Discourse is a sequence of sentences that are interconnected with each other and relate one proposition to another in the unity of the semantic meaning between the parts within a language context (Mandarani et al., 2018, p. 1). In the human sciences, three research paradigms emerge and compete with one another: positivist discourse analysis, interpretivism discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis. In Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), discourse is not considered just as the study of words. Language features with context are also included in the examined language. The context indicates that the language is employed for certain goals and behaviors. Critical discourse analysis is primarily interested in and motivated by the endeavor to understand pressing social issues (Dijk, 2017, p. 252). In addition, according to Fairclough (2013) the role of CDA is to identify discourse which reconstruct social life through analysis the specific part of linguistic such as semiotic and features of text. Therefore, critical discourse analysis not only focuses on the linguistic structure of discourse, but also connects it to the context and looks at it historically by incorporating aspects of social cognition and ideology, so that the analysis is not limited to the placement of language in a closed manner but looks at the context of how ideology plays a role in shaping a discourse.

As discourse can also cover other studies such as communication, information, politics, and literature (Putri et al., 2017), the discourse employed for this study is in the form of music video, a part of literature. A music video from Ariana Grande entitled *God is A*

*Woman* has been chosen to be analyzed. In the analysis, the researcher combined critical discourse analysis by also taking into account the multimodal aspects in the music video.

Multimodality is a study of discourse that analyze a language phenomena which combined with other several resources as a communication and representation of visual semiotic (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). They are facial expression, gesture, posture, and etc. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) was developed from Discourse and Critical Discourse Analysis. While discourse and CDA focus on the relationship between patterns of the verbal language or a single source of meaning and its context, MCDA takes into account verbal language with a combination of multiple modes of communication such as pictures and colors simultaneously (Subhaborwornrat & Punksirikul, 2022). This multimodality helps people to define more meaning of a written text.

Music, as one of the largest media, has a predominant role in contemporary society. Leeuwen (2006) stated that “in fact, music fuses ideological meaning and emotion, and it is precisely therein that its power lies” (p. 325). Song is considered as a powerful tool for transmitting ideas, not only because it reaches a wide variety of audience, it also makes use of different modes of communication (i.e. linguistic and visual), since most songs not only composed by its lyrics, but also makes use of visual element through its music video (Escalera López, 2017, p. 1). It has a significant impact on how social and cultural norms relating to woman and to gender, which heavily influenced by existing social and cultural norms at the same time. Dauphinais as cited in Destiny (2019) argued that in practically all musical genres, there are a lot of music videos featuring scantily dressed women standing in line for no other reason than to provide eye candy or to gratify a male (p. 61). That is, in today's culture, entertainment media such as music videos, music, and television objectify women, with a significant emphasis on the image of women as sex objects (Harper & Tiggemann, 2008, p. 58). This then lead to many issues like stereotyping and sexism, freedom of expression and gender equality.

According to *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, feminism is “the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim” and feminist is “having or based on the belief that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men.” In other words, feminism is the movement and feminist is the people. Feminism is the recognition of gender injustices led by gender stereotyping that affect woman in the household or in society. This movement has always been an intriguing issue to discuss and has never been completed fighting for. Feminism did not emerge from a single idea or concept based on a single theoretical formula. As a result, there is no abstraction of a specific idea of feminism's application for all women across the eras. According to Paramitha (2022), feminism is a word that does not have a precise meaning that can be formed as a definition since each feminist movement has its own goals that it wishes to fight for. In line with Paramitha, Susanto (2018) added that feminists have varied ideas on how to define feminism since feminism does not draw its conceptual and theoretical foundation from a single theory formulation, hence the meaning of feminism always evolves according to reality, feminists' socio-cultural background, degree of consciousness, perspective, and behaviors.

There are at least four primary school of feminism that have emerged according to Jaggar as cited in Hardhan (2022), which are (1) liberal feminism, (2) radical feminism, (3) marxist feminism, (4) socialist feminism (p. 3). There are also waves of feminism that are

divided into three waves (Tong, 2018), which are: (1) first wave of feminism, to provide possibilities for women; (2) second wave of feminism, where sexuality and reproductive rights were important problems; (3) third wave of feminism, a post-modern thought about universal femininity. The attempt to fight for independence and equality of status and social roles between men and women, so that gender discrimination does not occur in society, is the point of all the feminism schools and waves.

A number of researches regarding multimodal critical discourse analysis in music video have been conducted. A research entitled *Roaring Women: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of the Conceptual Metaphor of Women As an Animal in Songs by Lopez* (2017) is carried out by taking the ideas of Fairclough and Van Dijk on CDA and Kress & Leeuwen on multimodality. The researcher used *Roar* by Katy Perry and *Animals* by Maroon 5. The result shows that *Animals* portrays an image of an objectified woman, contributing to the perpetuation of the patriarchal ideology; while *Roar* portrays an empowered and self-sufficient woman, contributing to the creation of a new image that breaks with that ideology. A more research entitled *A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Female K-Pop Music Videos by Brady* (2015) used Kress and Leeuwen's framework for the grammar of visual design and to investigate whether the two sets of videos serve to satisfy a male viewer or not. The analysis showed that the two sets of videos differed, that SNSD videos did serve to satisfy a male viewer whilst the 2NE1 did not. SNSD videos empowered a male viewer through representing the girls as infantilized and through positioning the male viewer as if he were the male on screen, while 2NE1 videos did not satisfy or empower the male viewer but instead avoided or challenged the viewer through the use of oblique angles, particular types of clothing, and the actions. Another research entitled *Gender Identity: A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis of Bongo Flava-Song Video Niambie by Saimon* (2019) used multimodal critical discourse analysis to examine if the song involves co-constructed or deconstruction of gender identity. The results show that gender identity in the song videos is co-constructed in the sense that male gender is dominant over female gender alluding from patriarchal ideology through which men are supposed to dominate woman in all life aspects. The similarities between the three previous researches mentioned above are the theories and method used. However, the difference can be seen from the object used. The previous researches used object that represents woman as the inferior one, while this current research used object that views woman as the superior one.

Singer and musician Ariana Grande released a music video for her single *God is A Woman* in 2018. Women are depicted as more strong and powerful than males in the video clip. *God is A Woman* is a feminism-themed song that is expected to become an anthem for women's empowerment. It pictures women to be the center of the world. The pictured woman shows desire to be taken seriously and may play roles in numerous elements of life such as social life, power dynamics, and sexual issues. This is a fascinating subject to be investigated because males govern many elements of life in society. These factors motivated the researcher to conduct a research regarding multimodal critical discourse analysis about feminism that is preserved in Ariana Grande's *God is A Woman* music video.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative method and Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis were employed in this study. The primary source of data for this study is Ariana Grande's *God Is A Woman*

music video. This study's secondary data consists of supporting studies such as articles, theses, dissertations, and books. The data from this study were evaluated using Critical Discourse Analysis from Fairclough and Van Dijk to examine the context and feminist components, as well as Multimodality from Kress and Leeuwen to examine the visual semiotic in the music video. Facial expression, gesture, color, and bodily movement are examples of multimodality in this study. The researcher used Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) to examine each multimodality exhibited in the music video as well as the meanings behind those multimodalities.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the results of analyzing *God is A Woman* music by using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) will be discussed. In the music video, Ariana Grande represents woman as a God. There are a lot of interesting scenes in the music video since it's packed with a unique visual, pop culture, and historical references. There are a lot of different scenes in the music video, but here are the most special ones:

### 1. The Center of the Universe



*Image 1. God is A Woman MV [0:01-0:14]*

The multimodality of this scene's set is prominent with purple, a tinge of blue, red, gold, and sparkling, implying it's in outer space or a galaxy. Ariana is clothed in a pink garment that depicts femininity, and her gesture is standing still. Ariana's body movement at this point of the video is swaying back and forth, as if she's hula hooping the galaxy. It can be implied that Ariana, who represents women, is a God who stands on top of the world while the cosmos rotates around her. This scenario shows female strength by implying that feminine energy is at the core of everything and that she is capable of ruling the world and effecting positive change.

### 2. The Thinker



*Image 2. God is A Woman MV [0:43-0:55]*

In this scenario, the imagery is in monochrome. As shown in the image, all of the characters are on top of the book, which explains the monochromatic hue that depicts the color of the interior of the book. Ariana Grande sits on top of a stone on a giant book with a group of men smaller than her, representing female superiority. Men were calling her "bitch," "fake," "annoying," "stupid," "hoe," and other derogatory terms. Men use these slut shaming terms to characterize women as less clever and inferior beings. However, Ariana Grande's motion appears to be a copy of Auguste Rodin's classic monument *The Thinker*. Ariana replicated the statue, which was originally a naked guy, in her music video. She maintained her Thinker-like gesture while being hounded by males owing to a preconceived depiction of women as inferior. In actuality, *The Thinker* monument was created to represent philosophy due to its profound thinking and contemplation attitude. This demonstrates that woman's superiority is how she acts wisely by pondering things beforehand. A saying that properly describes this picture is 'empty drum makes a loud sound' or 'shallow water has ripples'.

### 3. The Ruler



*Image 3. God is A Woman MV [1:16-1:20]*

Ariana is dressed in a black gown that depicts mystery, strength, and elegance in this scenario. The purple and blue color in the backdrop represents outer space, and she is once again demonstrating how, as God, she is putting herself on top of the world to imply she is at the highest spot. She is depicted seated on top of the globe, implying that the globe is the

throne and she is the bearer of the throne. Ariana moves her finger in the song video, which causes the cloud she touched to move as well. It is possible to infer that woman, as God, has control over the weather and all other aspects of the world.

#### 4. Mother Nature



Image 4. *God is A Woman* MV [1:59-2:06]

The hue of this image is mixed with cream and brownish color to represent the past, when colors were not yet discovered, or even life. Ariana is shown developing flowers within her tummy to symbolise nature. Ariana's gesture of touching her pregnant tummy demonstrates her maternal nature. In this moment, she imagines herself as Mother Nature, a well-known personification. Mother Nature, according to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, is "nature personified as a woman regarded as the source and guiding force of creation." It emphasizes nature's life-giving and nurturing elements by embodying them in the form of the mother.

#### 5. The Creation of Eve



Image 5. *God is A Woman* MV [3:42-3:50]

This is the final scene in Ariana Grande's *God Is A Woman* music video. It concludes with paying homage to *Creazione di Adamo/The Creation of Adam*, a biblical portrayal of God creating Adam. Michaelangelo Buonarroti's original work may be seen on the dome of the Vatican's Sistene Chapel. However, in this video, Ariana reinvents the famous picture by portraying herself as God. The clothing of the God and other ladies besides her, who may be angels, are dominated by pink, which indicates femininity. Instead of giving birth to Adam, the

first male on Earth, she gives birth to Eve, the first woman. Ariana's move in this scenario is to extend out her hand to Eve, who is likewise reaching out her hand. This gesture depicts how God bestows the gift of intellect to Eve in order for her to attain her full potential and bring everything that her mind develops into creation.

## DISCUSSION

The researcher discovered feminist representation depicted by Ariana Grande as the primary character of this music video that symbolizes woman as the God in *God is A Woman* MV. At first glance, the work appeared to be only music with a film to entertain the audience, but it is actually laden with a lot of powerful messages. The lady in this music video is portrayed as a woman who can express herself, challenge patriarchy, have full authority over her body, and have power. Ariana portrayed herself as the center of the world, and she was not afraid to confront a guy who looked down on her. These statements are consistent with post-modern feminism or the third wave of feminism. Aside from that. On top of that, Ariana also defined woman supremacy over man and woman's position in society, which is consistent with radical feminism's view of man as a problem that must be avoided or attacked.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study done in *God is a Woman* MV by Ariana Grande utilizing Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, it can be determined that there is a lot of feminism representation since the song is about woman empowerment. The way the woman freely expresses herself, has full command over her body, and has power is a depiction of post-modern feminism. In the song video, the dominance of woman over man represents radical feminism. This music video, like the role of media, has the objective of influencing audiences through messages transmitted, which are a post-modern feminist concept and radical feminism ideology.

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